DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 319 438 JC 900 287

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| TITLE | Assessment Proposal: Genesee Community College, 1990. |
| INSTITUTION | Genesee Community Coll., Batavia, N.Y. |
| PUB DATE | 90 |
| NOTE | 19p. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Accountability; *College Planning; Community Colleges; Core Curriculum; Curriculum Development; Educational Assessment; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Flowcharts; Longitudinal Studies; *Organizational Objectives; Outcomes of Education; Program Proposals; *Self Evaluation (Groups); *Student Evaluation; Two Year Colleges |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Student Tracking |

ABSTRACT

A description is provided of the process proposed for the comprehensive institutional assessment of Genesee Community College (GCC) and the methods used to develop the assessment proposal. The proposal calls for the assessment to envelop the entire campus, tracking students from the preregistration phase, as they pass through their courses to the post-exit phase. Data will be gathered on students' computation and communication skills, general education, academic majors, and personal and social growth, using various academic testing instruments and survey instruments. In addition, traditional demographic data will be collected. The result of the effort will be the collection of critical information on college cohorts which allow for a longitudinal evaluation of a variety of college services and functions. An assessment officer and a tracking committee will develop, implement, and evaluate the various instruments called for in the proposal, and report the results to the college community. Included in the assessment plan are flowcharts that illustrate the student tracking process, a list of the critical questions to be answered by the assessment and the instruments used, and diagrams of the assessment plan. (JMC)

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# ASSESSMENT PROPOSAL

Genesee Community College 1990

JC900287

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# INTRODUCTION

The following document describes the assessment program proposed by Genesee Community College and the process that the College underwent to develop the assessment package. The proposal is one which calls for the tracking of students from what we have identified as the preregistration phase to the post-exit phase. Throughout each of the phases students will be tracked using a number of data collection methods. These methods will include various academic testing instruments and survey instruments. In addition, traditional demographic data will be captured at the various phases. The result of our efforts will be the gathering of critical information on college cohorts which will allow for longitudinal evaluation of a variety of college services and functions. The model on Page 14 provides a visual display of the chronological sequence. An assessment officer will be hired by the College. This administrator will be responsible for the oversight of the assessment activities. Along with a newly developed tracking committee, the assessment officer will identify, administer, and analyze the various instruments called for in the proposal. Furthermore, this group will be responsible for the reporting of the results to the college community. The proposal was written in a manner which calls for constant modification of the assessment process as well as the modifications of those services identified as needing attention.

## ASSESSMENT PROPOSAL

### Genesee Community College

Spring semester, 1989, a College-wide committee was appointed to develop a comprehensive assessment proposal. The committee is representative of faculty and staff across the institution. Members include the following:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ruth Andes | Professor | Sociology |
| Edna Baehre | Dean | Continuing Education |
| William Brewer | Instructor | Economics |
| RayLene Corgiat | Associate Dean | Curriculum/Instruction |
| Mike Crittenden | Associate Professor | Physics |
| Judy DePalma | Professor | Office Technology |
| Norm Gayford | Instructor | English |
| Francis Hoeft | Professor | Nursing |
| Ray Ladrach | Associate Professor | Electronic Technology |
| Susan Oleksy | Director | Student Activities |
| Pat Wormley | Technical Specialist | Academic Advisor |

Members of the committee began their task by first reviewing literature concerning assessment, including Peter T. Ewell, ed., Assessing Educational Outcomes, 1985; Peter J. Gray, ed., Achieving Assessment Goals Using Evaluation Techniques, 1989; and College Student Outcomes Assessment: A Talent Development Perspective, by Maryanne Jacobi, Alexander Astin, and Frank Ayala, Jr., (1987). The committee also reviewed the "Guidelines for Undergraduate Assessment" and "Principles of Undergraduate Assessment," provided by SUNY officials, as well as many other documents.

As it approached the task of formulating a comprehensive assessment plan, the Assessment Committee considered the Genesee Community College's Mission:

> Genesee Community College, a unit of the State University of New York, is a comprehensive, public, open-door college dedicated to service and leadership in meeting the educational, career and personal development goals of its students. Additionally, the College is responsive to the needs of the many diverse people, institutions, professions, and industries in its service area. The College is committed to addressing the changing needs of all students, traditional and non-traditional, through the development and implementation of new programs, the use of innovative educational techniques, and the provision of high quality instruction and services.

The Assessment Committee's proposal is firmly based on a continuing commitment to serving Genesee Community College students effectively by providing quality in academic instruction, as well student support services.

Members of the Assessment Committee began their efforts by working to define the scope of their task. Initially, at least, the committee approached its responsibility feeling, as one member described it, "unarmed." Members of the committee, together, agreed to define the task by identifying those issues/questions which are appropriately addressed through assessment, the answers to which would be useful in improving either the quality of performance by students or the quality of services (academic or student support) by the institution.

Recognizing that the committee must respond both rationally and rapidly in developing a comprehensive assessment plan, members elected to divide themselves into subcommittees aligned with the four areas of concentration outlined by SUNY: (1) computation and communication skills, (2) general education, (3) academic majors, and (4) students' personal and social growth. Members of each subcommittee drew upon input from the college community, college catalogs, professional experience, reading and research, as well as debates among themselves to characterize and define the parameters of a comprehensive assessment proposal for Genesee Community College. Survey questions were collated and circulated to the campus community.

Having completed the research and information-gathering stage of the task, members of the subcommittees felt prepared to generate the critical questions which would steer assessment efforts at GCC in each of the four areas: (a) computation and communication skills, (b) general education, (c) academic majors, and (d) students' personal and social growth. For example, after much discussion, revision, and debate, members of the subcommittee addressing general education compiled a series of questions which they felt should guide any assessment effort. The questions which emerged through this group process include: (1) "What competencies in writing (reading, verbal communication, computation/math, natural sciences, social science, humanities, critical thinking) were demonstrated at the completion of the degree or certificate?" (2) "Do GCC general education courses TRANSFER as core requirements?" and (3) "Are employers satisfied with graduates' ability to solve problems?"

Similarly, each of the subcommittees involved themselves with generating the critical questions which assessment efforts would address (the complete list of which appears in the assessment model which demonstrates the alignment of critical questions and instruments on pages 8-10). The central questions (and the inherent issues connected with them) were also discussed, reviewed, criticized, refined, etc., by the entire committee.

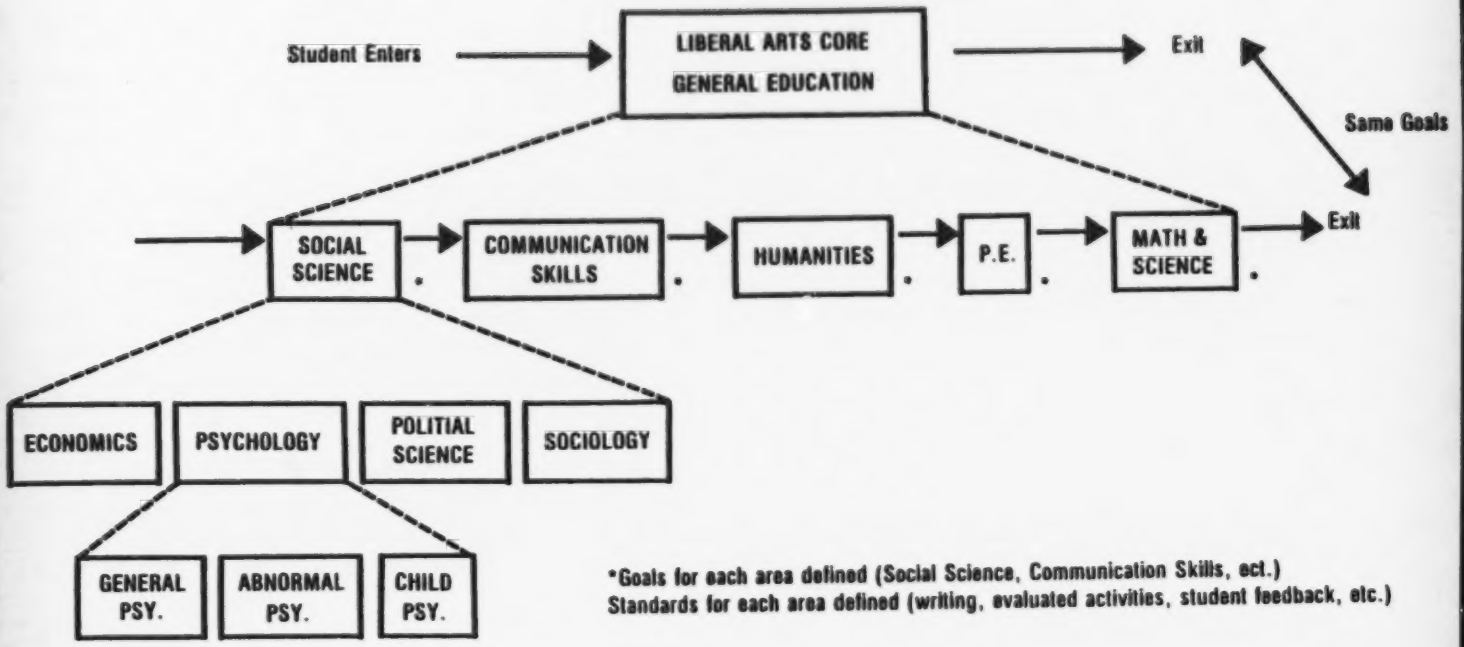
Following the generation of the questions, the committee identified the testing and survey instruments already in place on campus which could provide appropriate data. For example, ACT's most recent ASSET instrument (Form B), which is currently used to test students' competencies in math, reading, and writing, will also provide valuable data for the assessment of student background, goals, and intentions. Furthermore, the new enhanced ACT provides probability statistics concerning the likely completion of courses and programs by students.

The committee also identified those areas not addressed by the instruments currently utilized by the College. Recognizing the need for additional testing or survey instruments, members of the Assessment Committee consulted testing agencies, reviewed testing instruments, and selected those that seemed most appropriately to address the critical questions which had been posed. For example, the Committee recommends that ACT's "Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency" (CAAP) be utilized to measure and record students' competencies in reading, writing, mathematics, science reasoning, and critical thinking, upon exiting the college and as a requirement for graduation.

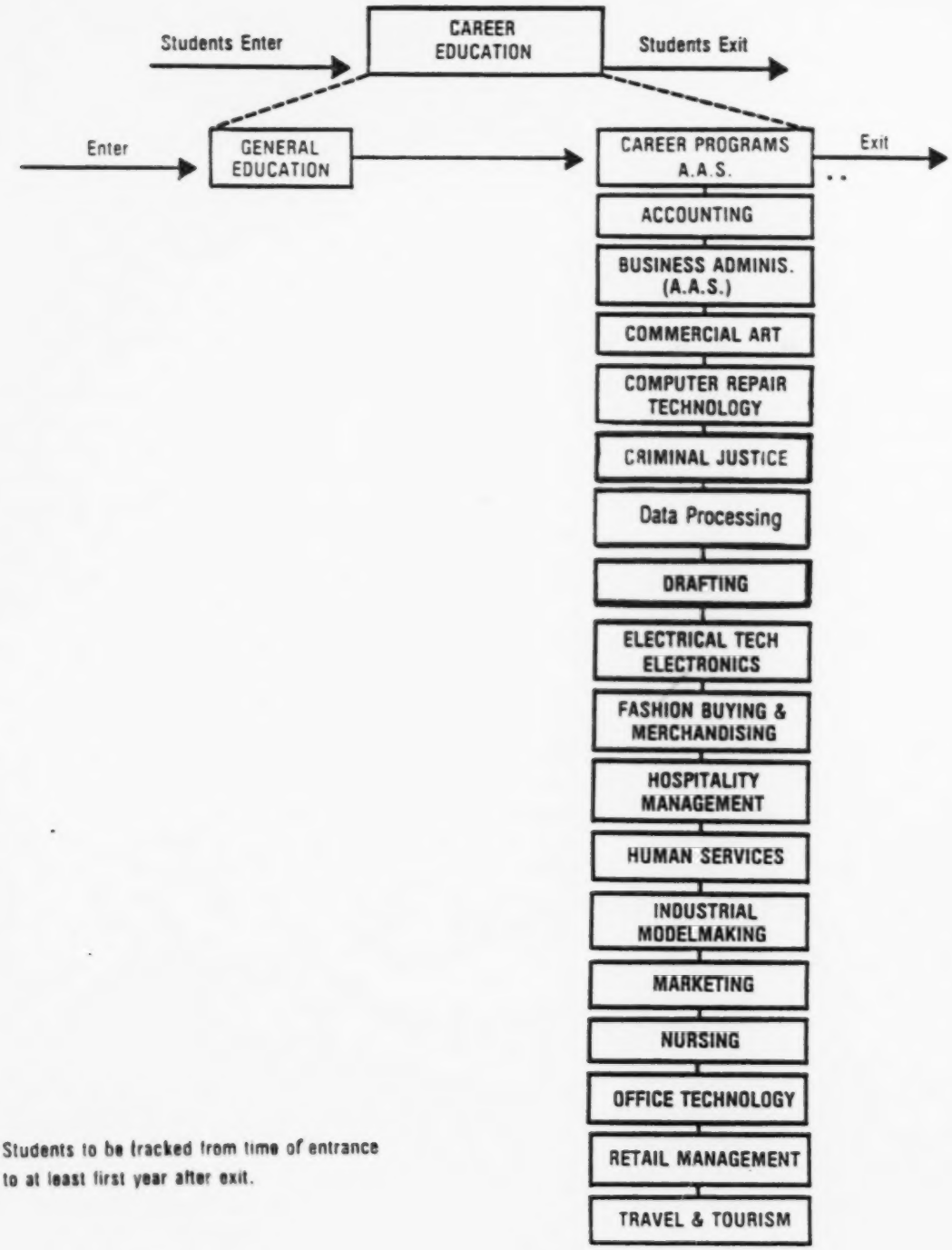
In some cases, the Committee recommended that a survey or testing instrument be created. That task will be assumed by the institutional Tracking Committee, composed of representatives of the faculty, administration, and the College's computer service (Systems and Computers Technology). Thus, the Assessment Committee has worked to create a strategic plan for comprehensive assessment at GCC. The Tracking Committee's role is to "operationalize" that plan, for example, by aligning computer usage with testing needs and refining the means and methods of surveying and testing as recommended by the Assessment Committee.

In addition, a General Education Committee is currently working to define the core curriculum for the campus. Members of the committee have determined that it will include humanities, social science, communication skills, math/science, and physical education. In so doing, this committee is also developing the goals and standards for each discipline area included in the core. The process involves identifying the goals (outcomes) of a general education core, followed by the identification of core area (discipline) goals, which provide consistency and continuity as students experience the total core. The following models demonstrate the process:

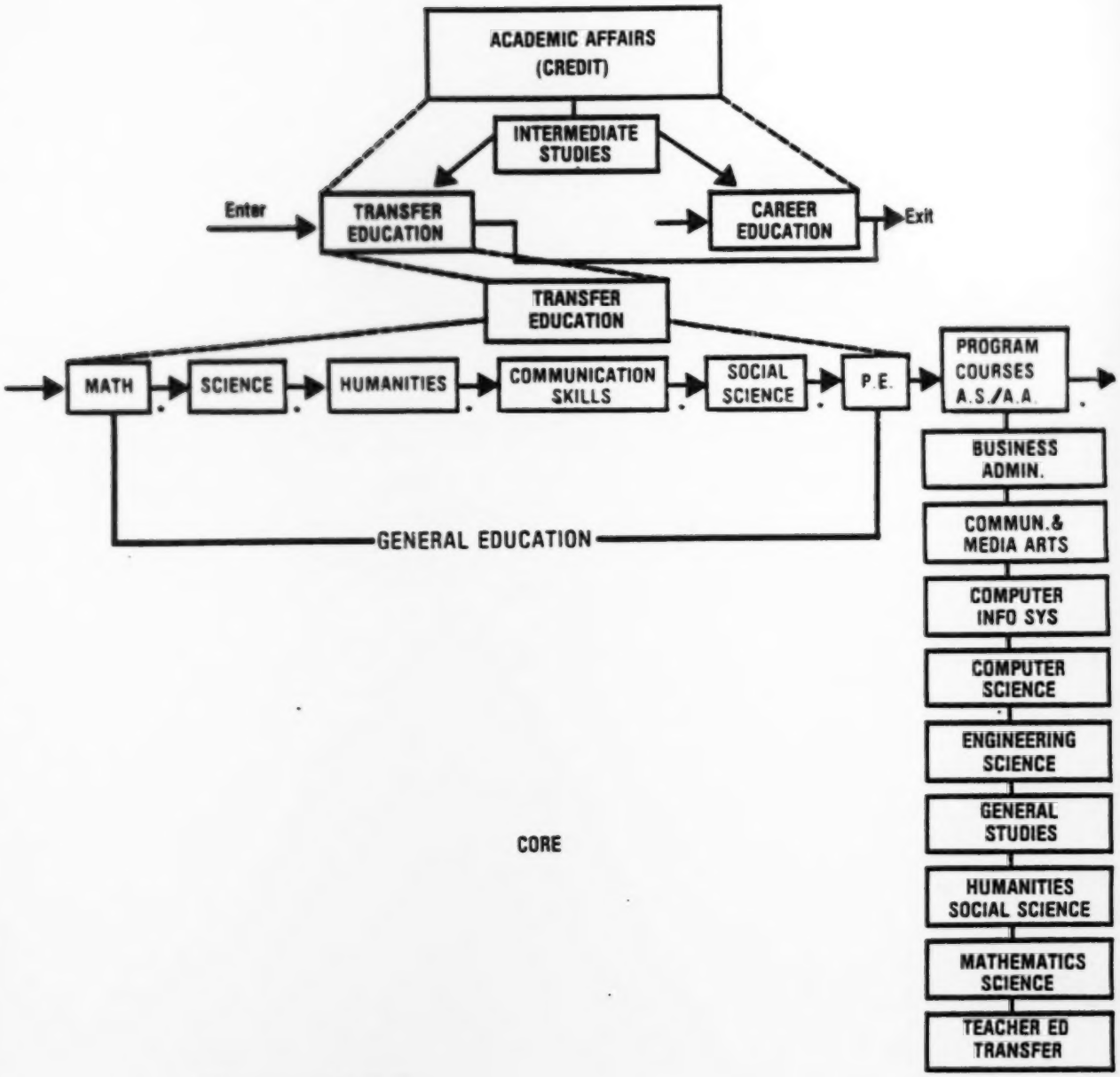
## GOAL IDENTIFICATION




*Goals for each area defined (Social Science, Communication Skills, ect.)
Standards for each area defined (writing, evaluated activities, student feedback, etc.)




**Students to be tracked from time of entrance to at least first year after exit.




CORE

*Assessment Activities

(See chart on page 10)

Thus the work of the members of the General Education Committee is, of course, closely aligned to that of the Assessment Committee. As the core is established by the General Education Committee, and the goals and standards for each discipline are clearly defined, assessment of student competencies can occur within those disciplines via instruments which have been developed on campus and tailored to those specific areas. In the future, questions which concern knowledge or skill can be assessed within each course. Such focused assessment will provide very specific data concerning whether or not the goals defined by general education have been fulfilled. At such time, CAAP may no longer be the instrument of choice for testing competencies as students complete their programs.

Armed now, at last, with both the list of questions guiding assessment, as well as a list of recommended instruments, the Committee created a flowchart which aligned the specific critical question it had worked so carefully to generate with the particular instrument which would address that question.

The model of Genesee Community College's proposal for a comprehensive assessment plan follows.

# ASSESSMENT
## Alignment of Critical Questions and Instruments

| QUESTION | Academic Support Service Records | ACT | Admissions Files | Application | Articulation Agreements | ASSET | CAAP | Course Grades | Dean of Students Records | Employer Survey(s) | Exit Questionnaire | Graduate Survey | High School Transcript | Program Review | Proposed Questionnaire(s) | Reading Comprehension | Student Record File | Transfer Institution Questionnaire |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I. COMMUNICATION/MATH SKILLS** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Competencies demonstrated at entrance to GCC | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **COMMUNICATION?** | | | | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| **READING?** | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | X | | |
| **MATH?** | | | | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Competencies upon completion of degree or program | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **COMMUNICATION?** | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **READING?** | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **MATH?** | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| Graduates meeting employers' expectation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **COMPUTATION?** | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| **READING?** | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| **WRITING/COMPOSITION?** | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| **II. GENERAL EDUCATION** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Competencies demonstrated on completion of degree or certificate | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **WRITING?** | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **READING?** | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **VERBAL COMMUNICATION?** | | | | | X | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **COMPUTATION/MATH?** | | | | | X | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **NATURAL SCIENCES?** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **SOCIAL SCIENCES?** | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **HUMANITIES?** | | | | | X | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| **CRITICAL THINKING?** | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| Do GCC general education courses TRANSFER as core requirements? | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Are employers satisfied with graduates' ability to solve problems? | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | |

Questions and Instruments (Continued)

QUESTION

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

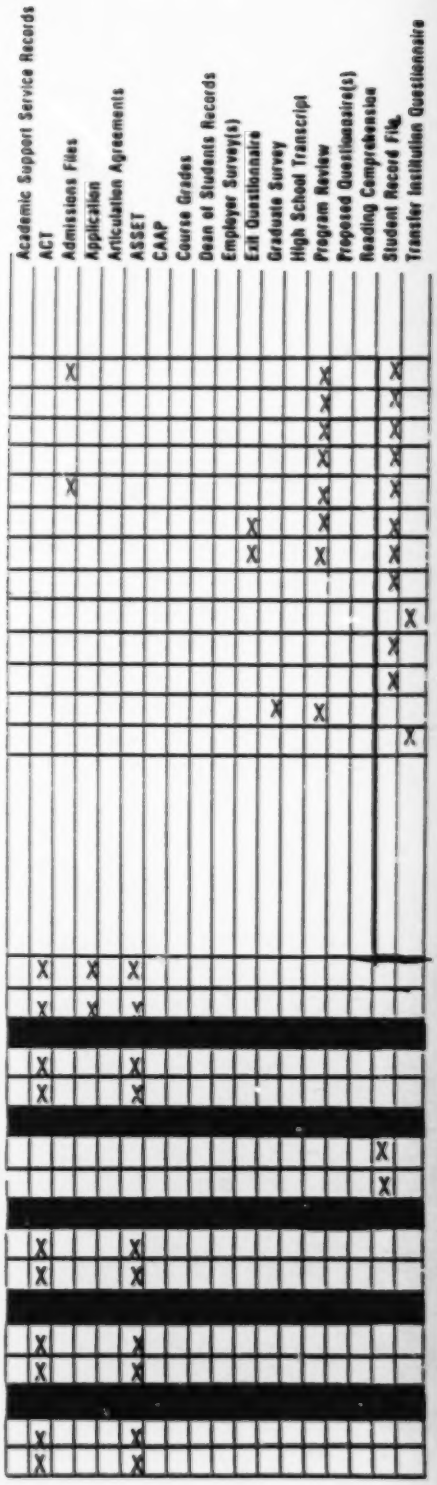
Statistics (by program)

Total ENROLLMENT?
Number with fewer than 30 Credit hours?
Number with 30 or more credit hours?
Number of internal transfer?
Number who transfer from another institution?
Number who exit for employment before completion?
Number who transfer before completion?
Number who transfer after completion?
Number who graduate from transfer institution?
Number who exit and return within 1-3 years?
Number who exit and return within 4-6 years?
Number of graduates employed in field of study?
How well do GCC students perform at transfer institution (by program)?

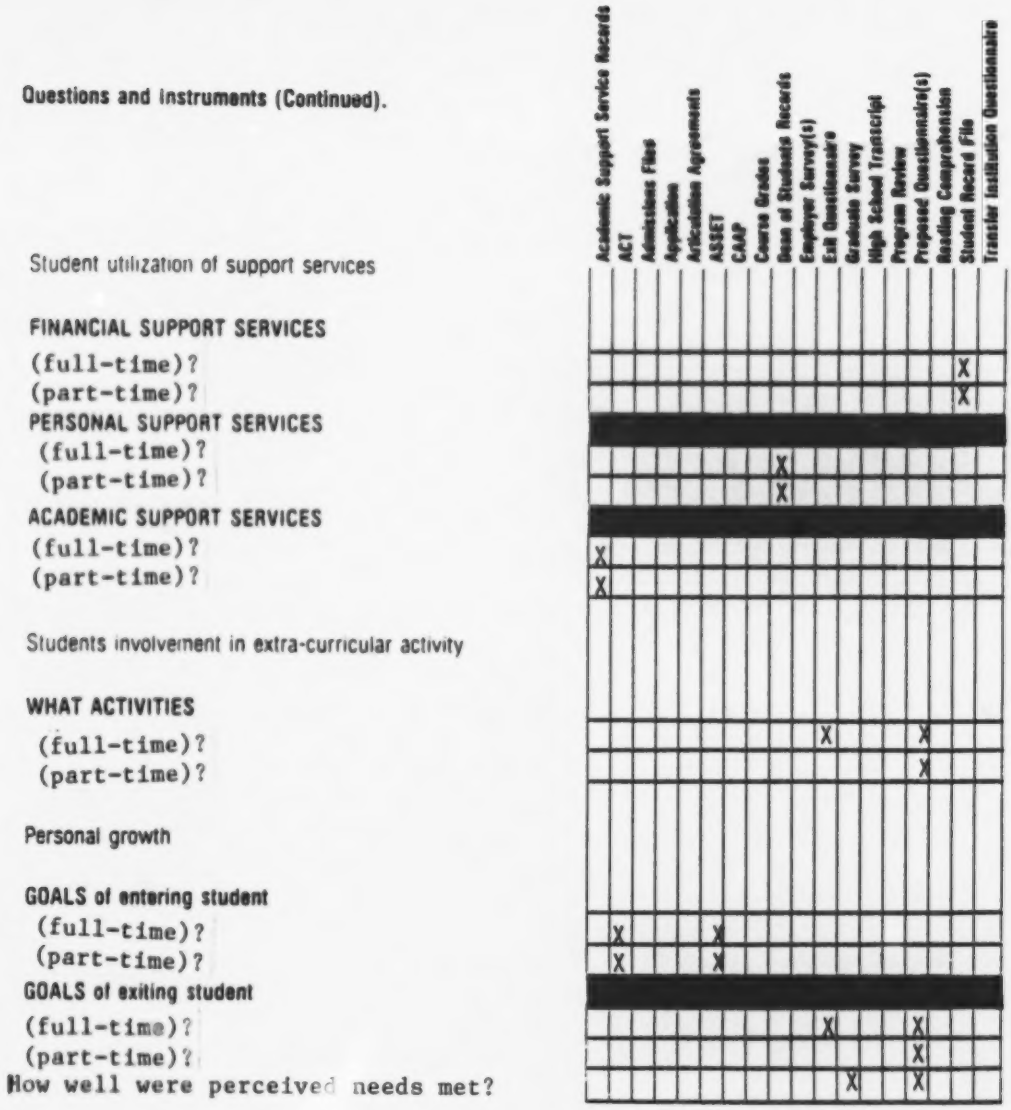
IV. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

PROFILE
(Full-time)?
(part-time)?
CAREER GOAL
(full-time)?
(part-time)?
PROGRAM MAJOR
(full-time)?
(part-time)?
FINANCIAL SUPPORT NEEDS
(full-time)?
(part-time)?
PERSONAL SUPPORT NEEDS
(full-time)?
(part-time)?
ACADEMIC SUPPORT NEEDS
(full-time)?
(part-time)?



**Questions and Instruments (Continued).**

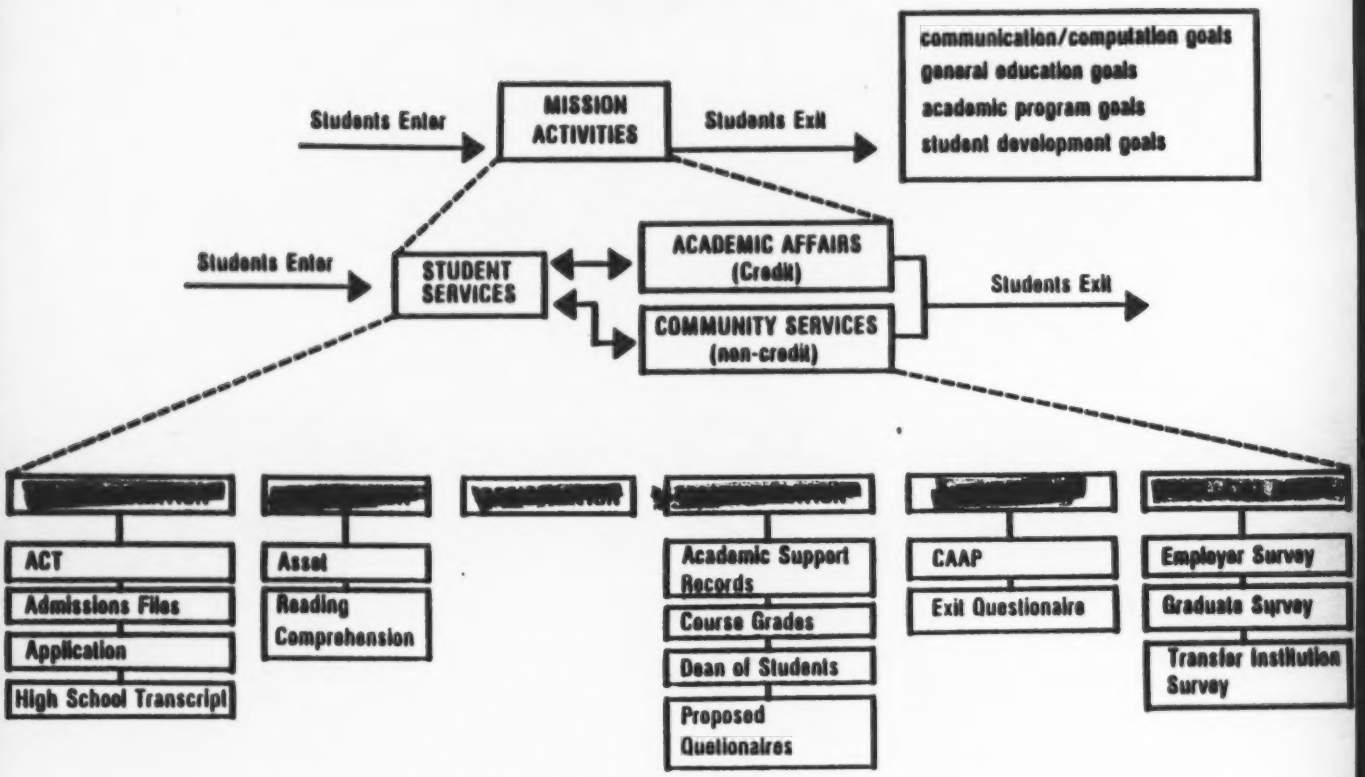


The data captured through assessment at Genesee Community College can be traced chronologically from the time the student enters the institution through the exit/graduation period, the transfer to a four-year institution and/or the progression to employment. In addition, the assessment proposal taps information generated by program review and articulation agreements, which exist outside the chronological progression of students through the institution but, nevertheless, are a source of important information. Genesee Community College is subject to state review and is regularly evaluated by Middle States. The information gathered through the assessment activities proposed here will, of course, contribute to information available for these reviews. Likewise, those review processes will also provide another source of data available for use in assessment.

The following model illustrates the chronological sequencing of assessment at Genesee Community College as students enter and exit the system:

## ASSESSMENT

## CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE




In addition (outside the model) assessment data will be made available via articulation agreements and periodic program reviews

Assessment at Genesee Community College will be approached in such a way as to follow the "principles" outlined by SUNY in its recommended "Principles of Undergraduate Assessment."

The plan developed by the Assessment Committee is comprehensive. Assessment will envelop the entire campus, occur as students enter, as they pass through their courses, as they exit, and track their progress as they proceed with their education or career. Furthermore, assessment will focus on the four areas recommended by SUNY: communication and computation, general education, academic programs, and students' social and personal development.

The Assessment Committee recommends that an individual, specifically responsible for institutional research, regularly provide the campus community with clear and meaningful summaries of the data collected in assessment activities. The competencies demonstrated in communication, reading, and math, by each freshman class, for example, will, thus, be made available in a comprehensible form to the campus community. Later on, that data can be compared with the competencies that class demonstrates upon exiting, and that information will be available to the campus at large. Likewise, each of the assessment activities outlined by the assessment model will be accompanied by a clear report of the outcomes. Gradually, as the campus community assimilates the information, adjustments can be made in recognition of demonstrated strengths and weaknesses.

Genesee Community College's assessment plan is complex. As indicated by the model, multiple approaches to assessment and multiple indicators of effectiveness are utilized, as necessitated by the diverse issues and complex arena of higher education.

The assessment plan is cost effective in that it recommends, wherever possible, the utilization of existing instruments and data.

The Assessment Committee, in preparing the proposal, incorporated input from the campus community. Collegiality was both an important element in creating this document and is also inherent to the plan itself. For example, members of the entire faculty were encouraged to participate in the process via surveys which contained both closed and open-ended questions. In addition, Assessment Committee progress reports were delivered at the monthly faculty meetings, and an informational report/discussion was presented by members of the Assessment Committee during Professional Activities Days preceding spring semester 1990. The Assessment Proposal itself is approved by members of the Academic Standards Committee and the Senate. Voting members of the Senate include faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Furthermore, as members of the faculty and staff respond to the findings made available through assessment, their participation in the process will continue and be an important factor in the implementation of the proposal.

One criterion utilized in selecting the critical questions, which will guide

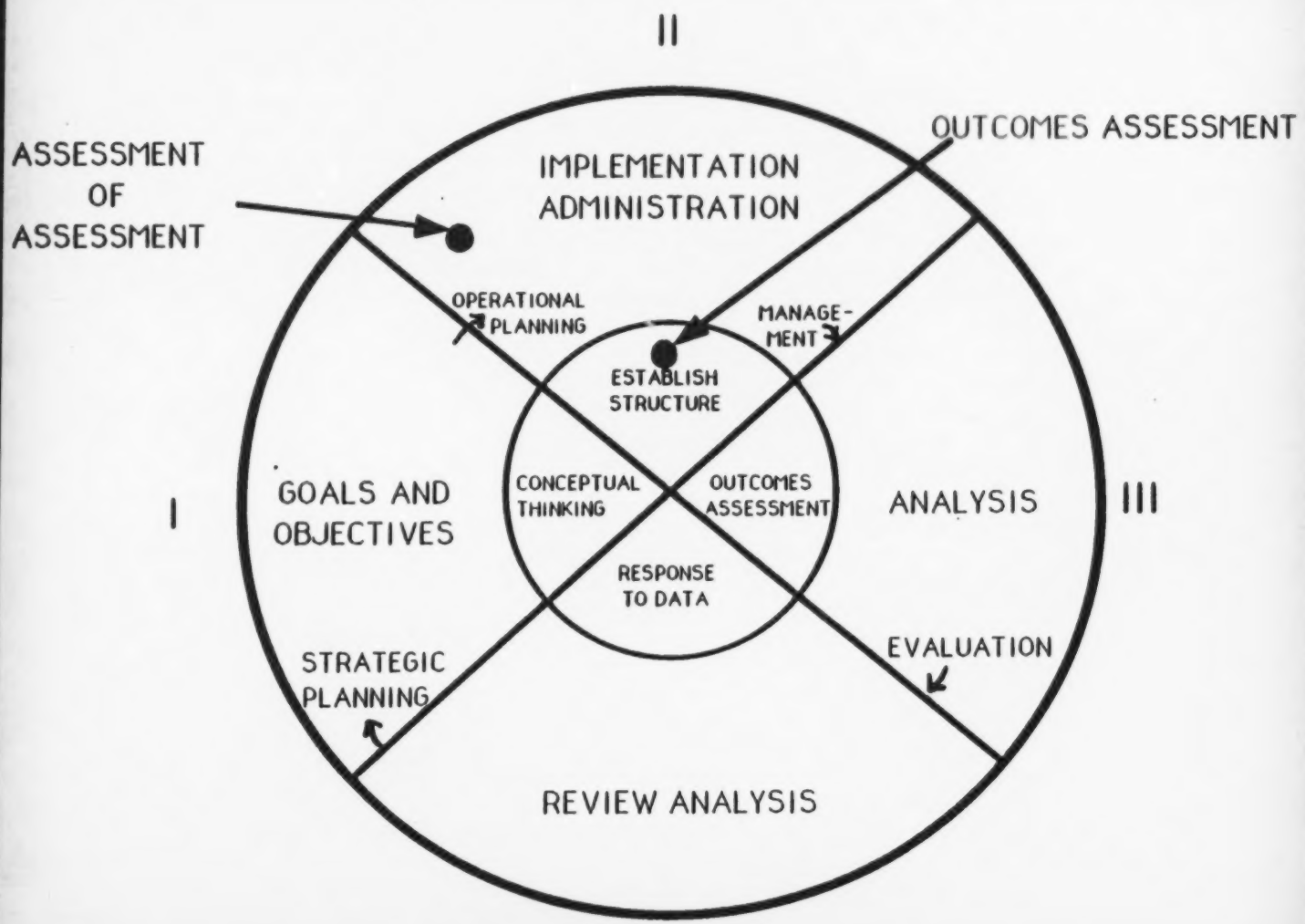
assessment at GCC and which is central to this proposal, was whether or not the information generated in response to the questions would be constructive. The intent of the plan is not to grade faculty, programs, or students, but provide input concerning how the College serves students, interpret that data, and use it to improve the delivery of programs, training, and services.

This proposal is campus based. It has been designed by representatives of the College, and it will be implemented by College representatives. The results of assessment efforts at Genesee Community College will be shared with the college community, and faculty and staff will continue to be included in the perpetual effort to improve the College's response to students' needs, both academic and personal.

This proposal reflects the mission of Genesee Community College. The plan includes a consideration of the diverse population served by a comprehensive, public, open-door college. Student competencies in communication, reading, and math will be assessed both upon entering and exiting the College, thus providing data concerning the wide range of student preparation and how the institution addresses those differences. In addition, student competencies in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and problem solving will also be assessed as students complete their degrees or certificates. Again, in recognition of its mission, the assessment plan at Genesee Community College reflects the needs of the diverse people, institutions, professions, and industries which it serves.

Finally, the comprehensive assessment plan for GCC will itself be refined and undergo on-going evaluation in an effort to improve, adjust, and tailor the plan to the needs of the College and its constituency. Thus, the strategic planning by the Assessment Committee will be followed by the operational planning of a Tracking Committee, which will coordinate the selection of testing and survey instruments, as well as the registration, orientation, testing, and computer processes that are necessary to the comprehensive assessment plan. The following model reflects how the process of assessment will be managed, probed, and perpetually re-evaluated:

# ASSESSMENT PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION



The primary purpose of evaluation is to aid in decision making. As indicated by the model, decision making is dovetailed to the goals of the institution, which, in turn, are determined by the key indicators of goal accomplishment, the methods of data collection, analysis, synthesis, and the process by which the information will be shared and, eventually, lead to necessary change. The procedures and practices generally accepted as evaluation are vastly diverse and often haphazard. Even with increasing public pressure for accountability, evaluation activities which have produced both credible and multipartisan reports are more the exception than the rule. Short-term solutions and cosmetic changes have, too often, been the response to vastly complex educational issues and institutions.

In creating this proposal, we recognize the ultimate question being addressed by assessment concerns accountability. The recent publications in education indicate that though much effort, expertise, and money have been directed toward increasing the accountability of educational institutions, the results have been disappointing. This proposal is submitted with a keen appreciation of the social, political, economic, and educational complexities which a comprehensive assessment plan must address. This proposal was guided by a constant consideration of the inherent value of evaluation, concomitant with accountability. We have prepared a model which we consider to be humanistic, empirical, and sensitive to the unknown, in reference to the effects of the process as well as the outcomes.

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